

French Baroque and Rococo Fashions



INTRODUCTION

Baroque fashion immediately brings to mind the Sun King, Louis XIV (1638–1715), whose reign established France as the international arbiter of style. Louis, the paragon of style for the French, shrewdly turned his quest for glory and love of conspicuous adornment into a highly profitable state business. Along with his minister of finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis set out to dominate the European market through expanded production of luxury goods. He converted Versailles, a modest hunting lodge, into a monumental Baroque palace housing not only his government but also his courtiers, who could not renew royal leases or have business with the king unless they resided at the palace.

The development of Baroque fashions during the reign of Louis XIV can be divided into three periods. The first—from about 1644 to 1660—was one of transition. The existing “cavalier” style was a holdover from the court of Louis XIII; it consisted of a jerkin [close-fitting upper-body garment] with lace trim on collar and cuffs; pantaloons; a large “falling” band collar; an ostrich-plumed hat with braid trim; and wide-cuffed riding boots

or shoes decorated with ribbon rosettes. Men’s hats were broad brimmed with a low, sloping crown. Louis XIV had a full head of black hair, and men who were not so fortunate adopted wigs to ape his appearance. To accommodate the wigs, shirt collars were reduced to neckbands with a falling lace ruffle or *jabot* filling the jacket opening. Lace ruffles called *cannons* were worn just below the knees. Silk stockings had ornamental designs known as “clocks.” The woman’s costume featured a wide lingerie collar, corseted bodice, puffed sleeves, and moderately hooped gown. The already tight bodice grew tighter; sleeves moved up to three-quarter length; and necklines dropped. Under the full skirt was a bell-shaped hoop of moderate dimension. Hairstyles featured short curls over the forehead and side curls hanging to the shoulders.

The second Baroque period (ca. 1660–1670) reached the peak of Louis’—and France’s—fashion glory. The king’s satin and lace mills, and other manufacturers of fashion goods, were making France wealthy. A single costume in Baroque style might be embellished with hundreds of yards of ribbon, lace, and *pasementerie* (fancy

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woven edging). Most popular for men during this period were petticoat, or *rhinegrave*, breeches, a circular skirt worn with underdrawers. The rhinegraves were lavishly ornamented with *galloon*—lace, embroidery, or braid trim—and ribbon loops. Square-toed, high-heeled shoes were preferred to boots. Women's costume took on extravagant ornamentation with gold and silver passementerie, lace, and ribbons. Skirts were long and full, with the overskirt, or *manteau*, looped back and held by ribbon bows. The long, slim, pointed bodice over a tight, high corset persisted, and the *stomacher* [a stiffened piece fastening over the front closure of the corset] remained an essential part of the wardrobe. Sleeves were now three-quarter or elbow length, and puffs were interspersed with lace flounces. Slippers had pointed, turned-up toes and very high heels known as "Louis" heels. A market developed for costume jewelry: Louis XIV loved diamonds and counted among his possessions the Hope diamond, known for a time as the "French Blue."

The third period of Baroque fashions (ca. 1670–1715) saw a great change in masculine fashions. The *doublet*, a close-fitting jacket, became a vest or waistcoat; the *justaucorps* [jacket] became a coat. Buttonholes with braid trim were called *brandenburgs*. Petticoat breeches remained fashionable until about 1680, when they were replaced by full knickerbockers. By the 1690s, closely fitted knee-length breeches that buttoned or buckled at the knee became standard. In the 1690s a scarf called a *steinkirk* replaced the jabot. The steinkirk was loosely tied around the neck in the manner of a cravat, its ends twisted and tucked into a buttonhole. Wigs grew larger, becoming more artificial in appearance, and were powdered. From around 1670, the wide, cocked-brim hat came into vogue, followed by the three-cornered hat around 1690. Men, as well as women, painted their lips, lined their eyes, and powdered their faces. From about 1675, the hair was dressed high off the forehead in clusters of curls arranged over a silk-covered wire frame, called a *commode*. High-heeled slippers called *panstouffles* were made of exquisite embroidered fabrics. Around 1650 the manufacture of artificial pearls was perfected by Jaquin of Paris, and a band of pearls around the neck became a fashion necessity.

Baroque's heavy grandiloquence neared its end with the death of Louis XIV; it was replaced during the reign of his great-grandson, Louis XV, by the Rococo style of exquisite refinement. The influence of Louis XV on fashion began when he was a young man, around 1724. After the death of Louis XIV, the nobles and wealthy bourgeoisie at Versailles sought to reinstate Paris as France's cultural center and built new residences in the city. They demanded a lighter, more intimate style after the ponderousness of Versailles's official Baroque, and Rococo was the answer [the word *Rococo* is derived from "rocaille"—

a form of intricate shellwork decoration].

Under the reign of Louis XV, French costume reached its apex. There were two Rococo periods—the first from about 1724 to 1750, the second from 1750 to 1770—during which design became less flamboyant and more dignified. The male *habit à la française* (French suit) retained the three fundamentals of coat, vest, and breeches from the Baroque period; it was the basis for men's suits in the nineteenth century. Fabrics used to make men's suits included silks, velvets, and woollens. The heels of men's shoes were lowered; in the 1770s large square buckles were the rage. The Rococo wig became smaller and straighter and was brushed up off the forehead with a soft roll of curls called "pigeon's wings" on the sides of the face. About 1755 these wings were replaced by horizontally arranged rolls over the ears—the *cadogan* style. White wigs were the most desirable; if white was unaffordable, the wig was powdered with flour. The hat of the period was the *tricorne*—a three-cornered, or cocked, hat—edged with braid and, perhaps, ostrich feathers.

Women's costume displayed two distinctive Rococo styles. In the early period, the Watteau gown, named after the painter, was the principal mode. The original Watteau gown was a loose sack or dress worn over a tight bodice and very full underskirt, sometimes incorporating a low, circular hoop. In the 1740s the *pagoda* sleeve took hold; it was tight from shoulder to elbow, where it spread into flared ruffles over cascading flounces of lace and ribbon. At mid-century the Watteau gown had evolved into the classic *robe à la française*. By the 1770s this style had become the formal dress for court functions, as well as the formal dress of choice in colonial America, England, and the western world. This dress had six box pleats in back, was stitched flat across the shoulders, and fell into a train. *Paniers* [side hoops] returned with the *robe à la française*. Extremely broad paniers on which the arms could rest were called elbow paniers; very small hoops, for morning wear, were called "considerations." Fabrics became more dainty and lightweight—lustrous satins and damasks, lawns and dimities—in a variety of pastel stripes and florals.

Hair was simply dressed, pulled back into a french twist ending in a curled topknot and giving the appearance of a small head atop a voluminous gown. From the 1760s, hairdos began to increase in height. Paint and powder were applied quite freely, but in more subtle shades than in the Baroque period. Scent was freely used; baths were still considered a medical treatment and were generally avoided. A German jeweler named Strasser invented "paste" jewels, or *strass*, and suddenly all was aglitter with sparkling stones. The periods of Louis XV and his grandson successor, Louis XVI, have been referred to as "the golden age of paste."



Cavalier Costume, ca. 1640

At the time that the cavalier style of clothing was popular at the court of Louis XIII, France was establishing itself as the center of European fashion. A look of rich simplicity was imposed on the flamboyant cavalier costumes. Both the woman's gown and the man's suit are

made of heavy satin in subdued tones, with abundant lace trim. The wide collar style was known as "Louis XIII." The man's long curls were known as "love locks." His ankle-high shoes have red heels and ribbon "shoe roses," or rosettes.



Early Baroque Fashions, ca. 1645

These styles show the continuing transition from cavalier to Baroque fashions. **Left:** Her box-pleated velvet gown is worn over a silk petticoat and corset. The wide collar was made popular by Anne of Austria, the mother of Louis XIV. The tight side curls were known as "heartbreakers." **Right:** The gentleman wears a cloth

cape; a short, square-cut, buttoned jacket; and a lingerie shirt with lace jabot. His short breeches have ribbon-looped cannons. His broad-brimmed, high-crowned hat has curled ostrich plumes; he wears a velvet baldric [a type of sash, or across-the-shoulder sword hanger].



Contrasting Styles, ca. 1646

Left: A flower vendor on the street wears a second-hand outfit consisting of a broad lingerie collar over a fitted bodice, a cloth underskirt, and a wool overskirt. There was a thriving business in used clothing cast off by the French nobility. **Right:** An upper-class woman

is dressed in a fur-trimmed hood, mantle, and fur muff. She holds up her train to keep it out of the street mud. Her petticoat is lace edged; the lace could be easily removed, washed, and basted back on. She wears a velvet mask to protect her skin from the elements.



Farm Couple, ca. 1650

She wears a short-sleeved bodice over a cuffed lingerie shirt and long-sleeved chemise. Her overskirt is belted, and the front tucked up in the belt to keep it out of the way while she works. She wears a cloth cap and soft

leather shoes. The man wears an old-style jerkin over a shirt; full breeches, or *slops*; and work boots. He carries a square blanket to use as a cloak.



Styles of the Upper Class, ca. 1650

Left: The woman wears a riding habit consisting of a brocaded velvet jacket with slashed sleeves; a white shirt; and a velvet skirt. She wears her hair loose for riding. **Right:** Her escort's costume still shows traces of the cavalier look but now consists of a fuller, shaped

jacket; it retains the older-style slashed sleeves. His full breeches have a ribbon apron over the front closure and are worn with lace-edged cannons. His shoes have "windmill" bows. He carries a walking stick and plumed hat.



Fashionable Men, ca. 1660

Left: The gentleman wears a light blue taffeta cassock [clerical-style garment] with gold galloon, buttons, and lace. Crimson ribbon loops complement a gold and crimson baldric. He wears petticoat breeches over yellow stockings and shoes with red heels and blue ties. His

black hat has crimson plumes. **Right:** This stylish man's costume consists of petticoat breeches and a short jacket with slashed sleeves worn over a lingerie shirt with double puffs at the waist. Gold ribbon loops embellish the outfit. His yellow kid shoes have red heels,



Widow's Costume, ca. 1660

This woman's outfit, shown front and back, exemplifies a widow's garments in mid-seventeenth-century France. She wears a wired black hood of sheer fabric over a long

black taffeta *manteau* [cloak] with shoulder wings and voluminous sleeves. Her gown is made of black satin brocade and is topped by a wide lingerie collar.



The Exemplary Style of Louis XIV, ca. 1660

Based on a portrait of Louis XIV, this illustration presents the “ideal” look of the second period of Baroque men’s fashion. The waistcoat of red velvet and red and gold brocaded silk is trimmed with gold lace and red

ribbon. Louis wears rhinegrave breeches and full lace cannons. His black hat is decorated with red plumes, and his red velvet shoes have red leather heels and windmill bows.



Queen Maria Theresa

Louis XIV's queen, Maria Theresa of Spain, is resplendent in a sepia and gold brocaded habit with red ribbon loops and tassels. Her underskirt is red with gold

embroidery. The bateau neckband is ornamented with a gold chain necklace that has a red jewel in the center. Her hair, styled in tight ringlets, is topped by a rosette bow.



A Well-Dressed Couple, ca. 1663

Left: The gentleman wears a habit of rose-colored velvet with silver ribbon trim. His white lingerie shirt has silver ribbon appliqué on the sleeves; the appliqué is repeated in the panels on the sides of his breeches. He wears a falling band lace collar. His shoes have wind-

mill bows. **Right:** The lady wears a gown of sky blue velvet over an underskirt of pale blue taffeta, both decorated with gold galloon. She has a lingerie fichu and sleeves with lace ruffles. The decorative ribbon loops are of satin ribbon.



Lady and Gentleman of the Court, ca. 1663

Left: This lady of the court of Louis XIV wears a dark velvet overdress and lighter-toned satin underskirt. The sleeves are of soft lingerie linen, with lace flounces and golden galloon. The dropped collar is also done in lace and galloon. Her silk hood is the same color as the

overdress. **Right:** Her escort wears a velvet cassock with gold buttons and galloon trim; an embroidered baldric; a lingerie shirt with a falling band and lace trim on the sleeves; and rhinegrave breeches with multicolored decorative satin ribbon loops.



A Gentleman, ca. 1663

Left: This rear view shows a man's cassock worn with rhinegrave breeches and a broad, lace-edged baldric from which a sword is suspended. His shoes have windmill bows. **Right:** The gentleman's full-sleeved

cassock is trimmed with embroidery and galloon; it is worn over ribbon-trimmed petticoat breeches and rhinegraves. His shoes are topped with rosette bows. He carries a flat-brimmed hat with ostrich plumes.



A Lady of the Court and King Louis XIV, ca. 1670

Left: The lady's satin gown has a pulled-back skirt trimmed in galloon; it is worn over a fringed taffeta underskirt. The sleeves and fichu are of white lingerie. **Right:** The king is dressed in a variation of his royal habit, which by this time consists of extremely wide

rhinegrave breeches and a circular skirt. The red and gold brocaded satin skirt is topped by a lace ruffle over a second flounce of lace; full breeches peek out from the skirt. His red velvet shoes have windmill bows and ribbon rosettes.



An Aristocrat, ca. 1670

This illustration shows the change in attire that defined the second phase of the Baroque period of Louis XIV. This aristocrat wears the newer style of a fitted coat with matching trousers, called a habit, or suit, in peach-

toned velvet. The immense sleeve cuffs, waistcoat, and lapel edges are trimmed with gold galloon. Around his hips he wears a loosely twisted rose-colored sash. His baldric, hose, and hat plumes are sky blue.



King Louis XIV, ca. 1670

Louis XIV's new look included a powdered wig, which made his dark hair appear blonde. His coat is of blue satin, with coral pink satin lining and cuffs. A white band with gold embroidery runs down the opening of the coat, as well as the coral-hued satin waistcoat. His

baldric is of pale blue satin. All the trim and fringe are gold galloon. His coat pockets are white with gold. He wears coral stockings, yellow kid gloves, black short boots, and a hat trimmed with ostrich plumes.



A Palace Guard and a Musketeer, ca. 1660-1700

Left: This officer of the palace guard is dressed in a dark blue brocaded satin coat, worn over lighter blue, lace-trimmed petticoat breeches and blue stockings. He wears black shoes and a hat trimmed with gold gal-

loon and white clipped ostrich. **Right:** A musketeer is shown in a sable habit with gold trim. He wears an ochre baldric, a lace-trimmed hat, and dark brown shoes.



Gentleman and Lady, ca. 1680

Left: The gentleman's scarlet habit, trimmed with gold ribbon, lace, and galloon, is topped by a falling neckband. His hat, cuffs, and shoulders have looped ribbon trim. **Right:** The noblewoman wears the new *fontange* hairstyle, consisting of a linen cap with tall,

wired frills; it is worn here under a dark satin scarf. Her yellow satin gown has gold embroidery. Draped over her shoulders is an orange and gold scarf that falls to the knee. She has sable-colored kid gloves and a sable muff decorated with orange ribbon.



A Lady of the Court, ca. 1680

This elegant member of the court of Louis XIV is dressed in a heavy dark satin gown decorated with golden fringe and gold lace *pretintailles* [colored appliquéd shapes] on the skirt and cuffs. She wears a

blonde lace bodice under the manteau. Long lace frills decorate the sleeves. She wears a tall fontage headdress and has placed "beauty patches" on her face.



A Woman of the Upper Classes, ca. 1690

This well-to-do woman is dressed in a gown in the style known as the "Mode bourgeoise." The outfit is remarkable for the profusion of lace trim, especially in the apron covering the front of the gown. The fontage

cap has long, wide ribbon *lappets* [headdress flaps or folds]. The woman holds up her train, revealing hose decorated with "clocks." She sports a beauty patch.



A Noblewoman and an Abbé, ca. 1690

Left: The noblewoman wears a dark gown; the manteau has an embroidered edge, pulled back to show a lining of contrasting color. The pale petticoat has bands of trim that match the color of the overdress lining. Her white lingerie sleeves overflow with lace. She

wears a pleated fontange and sheer scarf. **Right:** This abbé is dressed in clerical garb—a black wool coat worn over a brown woolen habit and brown hose. He carries a fur muff with a black satin ribbon and wears a felted beaver hat.



A Nobleman and His Son, ca. 1690

The nobleman wears a knee-length coat over a long vest that barely covers his breeches. The suit, of light-toned taffeta, is trimmed with gold braid and buttons. He wears a white lingerie shirt with a lace-edged jabot and sleeve flounces, and a baldric of brightly colored

satins. His black hat has an ostrich fringe. His son wears a scarlet habit with satin trim and a dark blue baldric. His shirt and jabot are white. The father's wig is powdered; the boy's remains dark.



A Noblewoman and Her Daughter, ca. 1690

The girl is dressed in a pale gown, with a lace transparency over the bodice, and a petticoat and train. She wears a white fontange cap. Her mother wears a satin bodice and manteau over a skirt with satin bands. Her stomacher is covered with ribbons in the

échelle [ladder] manner. Her fontange is of lingerie and white lace, as are her wrist flounces. The mother and daughter, along with the father and son shown on the opposite page, represent a well-to-do family of the reign of Louis XIV.



Madame de Maintenon, ca. 1690

Madame de Maintenon, the second wife of Louis XIV, is shown with Louis' great-grandson (the future Louis XV), whom she has secured on a length of golden rope. She is dressed in a black velvet gown with silver trim; she wears a black lace fontage and black satin

hood. Her sleeves, neckband, and gloves are white. Young Louis wears a baby gown of gold on white brocaded satin with satin galloon trim. His baldric is of dark blue, as is his velvet hat with ostrich plumes.



A Nobleman, ca. 1690

This nobleman is wearing his military armor of burnished silver. His habit is of a dark color and is trimmed with gold braid. Following the style of the time, the cuffs of his sleeves are now so wide that they

hang free of the arm. His lightly powdered wig extends almost to his waist in the back. The sash is twisted and draped around his hips in the popular fashion. His "boots" now barely cover the ankle.



Street Scene, ca. 1700

A street vendor chats with a milkmaid. Both are wearing secondhand clothing. These garments frequently consisted of cast-offs from the closets of the nobility;

the clothing was circulated in the used-clothing market. As such, the fashions of the street people exemplified past styles.



Changing Styles, ca. 1725

With the advent of the new Rococo fashions, both men's and women's hairdos were more modest. The fontage disappeared and the cap shrank to almost a doily. Colors were more subtle, as in this habit of pink and pale green iridescent taffeta with a woven satin

stripe. Her stomacher is of pale gray silk edged with lace. She wears a silk velvet *mantilla* [cloak or cape] with widely ruffled sleeves. Around her neck she wears a knotted lace scarf.



A Strolling Couple, ca. 1725

Left: The lady wears a silk "flying gown," also known as the Watteau, in a French adaptation of an oriental flower print on gown and underskirt. On her powdered hair she wears a small ruffled cap with short ribbon lappets. Her shoes are embroidered silk. **Right:**

The gentleman's costume consists of a cloth coat with silk vest and breeches and a white shirt with a cravat and jabot. He wears a powdered bag wig with pigeon-wing side curls and a cocked hat with gold braid trim.



Gentleman and Lady in Latest Styles, ca. 1730

Left: The man wears a medium-toned cloth suit with deep cuffs. The coat has double buttons and buttonholes in gold down the front. His white shirt and jabot are lace edged, and he wears a wide "cadogan" bow

over the jabot. **Right:** The lady wears a "flying" gown of polished cotton in a bold floral print over a solid-color silk underdress. Wide silk bowknots adorn the bosom and the wide pagoda sleeves.



"Watteau" Gown with Chinese Motif, ca. 1740

Printed silk in a Chinese motif, this gown with "Watteau" pleats and modified train is worn over a solid color taffeta underskirt. The lace-edged lingerie

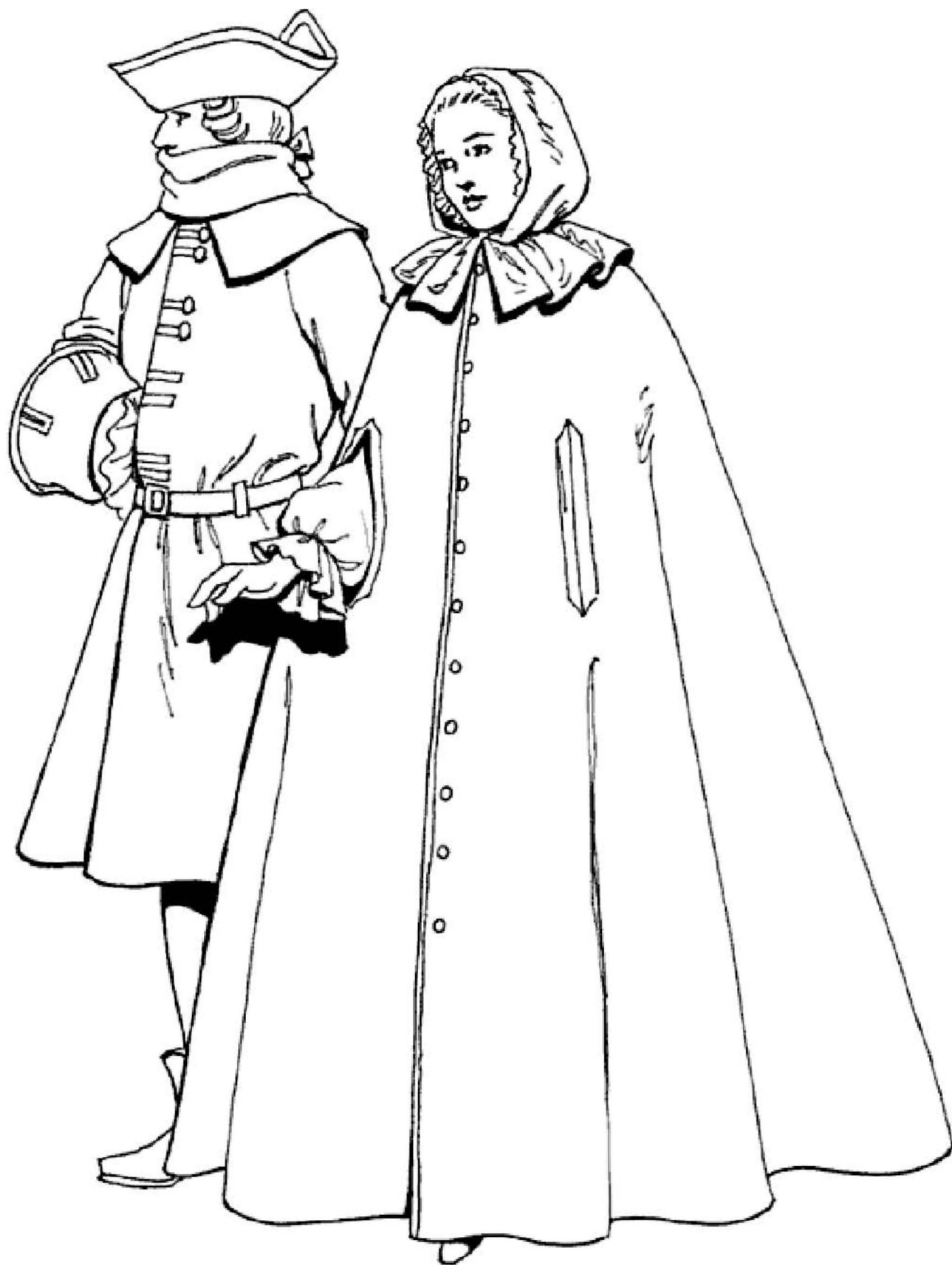
cap with lappets is white, as are the sleeve frills and the edging on the neckline.



Robe à la Française, ca. 1750

By mid century, the *robe à la française* was replacing the Watteau gown as the preferred formal wear for fashionable women. This early version of the gown is of medium-toned satin, with lace frills at the wrist and

neckline; it hailed the return of the side panier and deeply pointed waistline. This stylish woman wears a velvet ribbon in her powdered hair.



Winter Fashions, ca. 1755

Left: The man wears a leather-belted woolen *redingote* [three-quarter or full-length coat] in a dark tone. His neck and chin are wrapped in a wool scarf for protection from the cold wind. He wears a cocked hat with

satin binding. **Right:** The woman wears a full-length, fur-lined mantle and a heavy silk hood with attached shoulder cape.



Madame Pompadour, ca. 1760

Madame Pompadour was a patron of the arts whose interests in creative pursuits enriched life at Versailles, where she lived as the mistress of Louis XV. Like most women of the time, she designed her own gowns. Her version of the *robe à la française*—the standard by

which all other gowns of the era were measured—is done in pale-blue taffeta with rose ribbons, white lace trim, and silk roses with pale green ruffled ribbon for foliage. She wears embroidered gold slippers and sports a rose in her powdered hair.



Shepherdess Style, ca. 1760

A favorite costume for the upper class's costume parties was the rustic "shepherdess" dress [two decades later, Marie Antoinette dressed as a milkmaid at Versailles]. This romanticized version in pale taffeta is worn over double paniers. It has jeweled buttons and

satin bows for trim; the pagoda sleeves end in lace flounces. Her powdered hair has ribbon bows with lace flounces. Her embroidered shoes have upturned oriental-style toes.



Rococo Gown, ca. 1775

This woman is shown in a side view of a *robe à la française* in solid color satin with a contrasting underskirt. The back pleats are stitched to the fitted bodice. Three tiers of lingerie frills matching the collar of the gown fall from the slightly puffed pagoda sleeves. Her

small cap, worn atop her powdered hair, has a bow that matches the bows tied on her sleeves. The opening of the manteau is self-ruched; the bottom of the underskirt has double flounces.



Hairstyles, Hats, and Accessories of the French Baroque Period



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A Nobleman and His Son, ca. 1690 (p. 24)



A Noblewoman and Her Daughter, ca. 1690 (p. 25)

French Baroque and Rococo Fashions

Fashion ruled the courts of the "Sun King," Louis XIV (1638–1715), and his successor, Louis XV (1710–1774). The Sun King's quest for glory and love of conspicuous adornment manifested itself in his apparel, and he required the courtiers of Versailles to adopt similarly grand Baroque styles. A lighter fashion sense prevailed at the court of Louis XV, who favored Rococo styles of exquisite refinement.

This magnificently rendered, scrupulously researched coloring book covers 135 years of French style. Its 45 full-page black-and-white illustrations feature a wide spectrum of fashions, depicting costumes of both the nobility and commoners. Starting with the flamboyant cavalier clothing of the 1640s, the drawings trace the transition from Baroque to Rococo apparel, with portraits of farmers, street vendors, and aristocrats in formal and everyday dress. Each illustration is accompanied by an informative caption.

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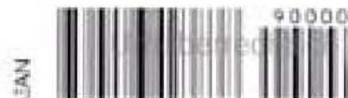
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